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TAGS: [PREL](#) [NATO](#) [MOPS](#) [MARR](#) [NL](#) [AF](#)
SUBJECT: NETHERLANDS/AFGHANISTAN: NEXT STEPS

REF: A. SECSTATE 120807
[1](#)B. BRADLEY-GALLAGHER EMAIL
[1](#)C. GALLAGHER-DAALDER EMAIL 11-24-09
[1](#)D. THE HAGUE 663

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Gallagher for reasons 1.4(b,d)

[1](#)1. (C/NF) SUMMARY: Senior Dutch officials report that Dutch decision-making on an Afghanistan deployment post-2010 is frozen, but President Obama's new plan provides an opportunity to engage D/PM Bos, who remains the most difficult figure in the Dutch political decision. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C/NF) DECISION-MAKING FROZEN -- Charge met with Dutch National Security Adviser-equivalent Karel van Oosterom and deputy MFA Political Director Robert de Groot to share Washington's priorities for Afghanistan, covering the topics in ref A & B. Both Van Oosterom and De Groot agreed that once the President's plan is made public, it will go a long way to helping the Dutch concentrate on their own decisions. Both said nothing has happened in the past few weeks in Dutch Cabinet, as the issue has been "frozen" since the Parliamentary debate in which the Labor Party pushed through a marker that no further Dutch involvement in Uruzgan should take place past 2010. Once the President unveils his plan, then it will be incumbent on the Cabinet to make a decision, hopefully before Christmas. (COMMENT: The Labor Party, a member of the ruling coalition, may oppose any decision before the March 2010 local elections, see ref D. Asked about the possibility of Labor pulling out of the government and forcing new elections over this issue, Van Oosterom did not seem that concerned. END COMMENT.)

[1](#)3. (C/NF) PM, MOD PRIORITIES -- The PM is most interested in four clusters of future engagement in Afghanistan: (1) maintaining OMLTs and PMLTs; (2) supporting EUPOL; (3) the PRT in Uruzgan; and (4) Apache and F-16 support. The PM believes the only place that it makes sense for continued significant Dutch involvement is in Uruzgan. Furthermore, according to Van Oosterom, the Chief of the Dutch Defense Staff has told his leaders that the military can only operate in a significant way in Afghanistan in Uruzgan because of the experience they have gained there. The Dutch military is not in a position to just pick up stakes and take over a PRT someplace else.

[1](#)4. (C/NF) D/PM BOS WILL BE THE "NUT TO CRACK" -- According to Van Oosterom, if the US announces it will take over leadership of RC-South without being specific about what we want from the Dutch, then Deputy Prime Minister Bos (Labor Party) will immediately take that as letting the Dutch off the hook in Afghanistan. While the Dutch military and most of the civilian leadership believe it is important to stay in Uruzgan rather than move to another area, Bos is opposed to

continuing there, and some in the Labor Party think it makes no difference where the military serves. And although the Dutch who support continued engagement in Afghanistan envision a PRT involved in development, democracy and defense, many in the Labor Party, including Development Minister Koenders believe that a Dutch PRT could consist of a few civilian aid workers. (In fact, we were told that when Koenders spoke to Ambassador Holbrooke last week about the Dutch maintaining a PRT in Uruzgan, Koenders just meant the civilian component, not the security one.)

15. (C/NF) INFLUENCING THE DUTCH DECISION -- Van Oosterom said it would be particularly useful if the President or the Vice President could call the PM during the roll-out, in order to help the PM build support among his own Cabinet for taking the decision on post-2010 in Afghanistan. Reaching out at a high level to Minister Bos will be needed -- perhaps starting with a preliminary call to Finance Ministry Secretary General Ronald Gerritse, the senior-most civil servant in the Finance Ministry and perhaps Bos's only real, non-partisan confidant.

Gerritse may provide some ideas on how best to engage Bos. Bos needs to know that we appreciate all the Dutch have done over the years in Afghanistan. This lends proof to the widely-held belief that the Dutch "punch above their weight," but at the same time, Bos needs to also understand that future Dutch contributions in many areas are a key to maintaining that reputation.

GALLAGHER